

rampant inflation, which means we're going to be hit with higher prices and higher interest rates. That is going to be a tax.

So I see the only solution is to cut spending. Now, the reason we don't cut spending is one side loves entitlements and the other side loves war. And even this token attempt, \$100 billion of cuts when we have this huge, huge deficit will accomplish very little.

But there's no mention of cutting military spending. I don't want to cut defense spending. This military spending doesn't defend us; it makes things worse.

Our problem in this country doesn't come only from the Congress; it comes from the people. The people still have a strong appetite for Big Government programs. They're not willing to cut. They think government can take care of us from cradle to grave and that we can be the policeman of the world.

So some day we, as a country, we, as a people, and we, as a Congress, will have to ask, what should the role of government be? The Founders had a pretty strong suggestion. They wrote a Constitution and said the government should be very limited and the government should be protecting our liberties and providing national defense and a sound currency. We don't do any of that. We've embarked on a course that was destined to end badly, and this is where we are today.

So if we don't understand this, this default will not be because we don't send out the checks. We will send out the checks. It will be defaulted on because people will get their money back, or they will get their Social Security checks, and it won't buy anything. That is much, much worse than facing the fact that we not raise the debt limit and work our way out of this.

That is devastating economically, and it's devastating politically, because we just saw a taste of what happens, how the anger is built when you see other countries in Europe now defaulting and can't pay their bills. So this is more significant than ever because we provide the reserve currency of the world.

THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO VOTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, the right to vote is a fundamental right which is at the heart of this Nation. This right is under attack.

I came to this floor, after the stolen Presidential elections in Florida and Ohio, to protest the results of these two elections that were filled with voter suppression. Now, years later, 34 States, once again, in our map of shame, require voters to present IDs to vote in Federal, State, and local elections. And in 15 of those States, voters must present a photo ID. Some States require that the ID be government-

issued, mind you, in order to cast a ballot.

However, for any number of reasons, 21 million Americans do not have a government-issued ID required by these voter ID laws; and, thus, the fundamental right of American citizens is taken away. Most State legislatures have enacted or have proposed legislation echoing similar detrimental voting changes. Many of these bills have only one true purpose, and that is the disenfranchisement of specific populations of eligible voters.

In California, unfortunately, there is a voter ID bill pending to suppress voter participation. It would cost, mind you, \$26, \$26 just to get the required documents to qualify for a government ID. This certainly looks like a poll tax to me, which all of us from the South know and remember as a way to keep African Americans from voting.

These voter ID laws have a partisan agenda seeking to deny specific populations of people the opportunity to not to vote, which is really very shameful before they have an opportunity to elect their representatives in government. And we cannot allow this.

So I have to thank Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE, the Congressional Black Caucus, and all of our colleagues for their voices to protect the right for all citizens across this Nation. And I urge the Department of Justice to be vigilant and aggressive in protecting the civil rights and voting rights of Americans.

We go around the world preaching democracy and the importance of voting; yet we are going in the opposite direction in our own country.

Now I would like to yield to the gentleman from Tennessee, Representative COHEN.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Ms. LEE. I appreciate your yielding, and I appreciate Congresswoman FUDGE for bringing this issue to the floor.

We previously heard from other Congresspeople and particularly the distinguished Congressman JOHN LEWIS, who was a civil rights hero in the 60s and risked his life, as others did, and gave their lives for the right to vote.

We are experiencing today, after International Nelson Mandela Day, yesterday was Nelson Mandela's 91st birthday. Next month we'll dedicate a memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King on the Mall. When you think about Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela and JOHN LEWIS, you've got to think about voting rights and how far the Nation and the world have come in the last 45 years and how long it took to get there.

And to think that there are impediments being placed in the way of people to vote, whether intentional or not, I believe those impediments are being placed there intentionally to dissuade African Americans and Democratic-leaning groups from voting in the 2012 election, Rovian tactics to stop President Obama from being re-elected and

from the public to pick Democratic Representatives to switch the priorities of this House to those that would be more reflective of the middle class and people who are yearning for opportunity.

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But whether they're intentional or not, if they have an effect that is harmful to voting rights, just like other laws, if they have an effect in practice, they are just as harmful and just as wrong as if they were intended. And there is no question that these types of impediments to require people to get voter IDs, when 25 percent of African Americans in this country don't have that type of ID and 8 percent of Caucasians are in the same limitation of not having that type of ID, it's obvious that African Americans and students and others are the ones that are designed to be targeted by these laws.

In my State of Tennessee that passed such a law, to get a photo ID is not easy. I went myself to get a driver's license with a photo ID. It took 1 hour and 20 minutes, constantly standing in line, no place to sit. It was not easy and people will not be able to do it. It will be an impediment to them and limit their opportunity to vote. It's wrong.

I would like to thank Ms. LEE and Congresswoman FUDGE for bringing this to the American public's attention.

Ms. LEE. Thank you.

IT'S TIME TO BALANCE OUR BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, only in Washington can you hear people say that it's irresponsible to balance the budget. I actually heard Democratic leaders on TV this weekend complaining that it would require a supermajority vote to raise taxes on the American people but only a majority to cut spending.

Well, maybe some people have been in Washington too long to realize it, but the American people want to tie Washington's hands and make it easier to cut spending than raise taxes. They want to cap the growth of government. They want to require a balanced budget.

For decades we've heard excuses for why Washington's special and shouldn't be forced to balance its budget. It's time to tell those people that their scare tactics are over. This is a new day. In America the people are sovereign, and today the people demand accountability. They demand a responsible, constrained government. They demand a balanced budget. Clearly Washington is never going to choose to balance its budget; so the people demand that we force it to.

Forty-nine out of fifty States have some form of a balanced budget amendment. If 98 percent of the States know

this is a wise plan, why do Washington politicians fight tooth and nail against it? The answer is plain and simple: power. They will try to scare the American people any way they can to avoid losing power over this massive, bloated bureaucracy. They will say today that they must have this power or else they can't keep taking care of people. They will try to scare seniors to continue their unrestrained power to borrow. They say they will manage their borrowing power wisely; they will restrain themselves.

Well, talk is cheap, and I've heard this same line for decades. What matters are results. How have Washington politicians been managing their borrowing power? One number will tell you: \$14.3 trillion—the amount of our debt today.

A balanced budget amendment is essential because the government has shown time and time again that until we restrain its spending with fiscal handcuffs, the problem will continue. President Obama has only made our spending problem worse by adding \$3.7 trillion to the national debt in just 2 years. The President has spent more money in less time than any other leader in American history.

Last week President Obama told Republicans, "Don't call my bluff." Well, I for one think this game has gone on long enough. The power needs to be restrained. As Lord Acton famously said, "All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Today we fight back against this corruption of absolute power. Today we stand with the American people. Today we vote to return the power to the people.

We invite President Obama to get on board, oppose this runaway spending, and pass a balanced budget. Five years ago he agreed. On March 16, 2006, then-Senator Barack Obama stood in the well of the Senate and said, "The fact that we are here today to debate raising America's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure." He spoke of the "commonsense budgeting principle of balancing expenses and revenues." But then 5 years down the road, unfortunately, President Obama is singing a different tune. He has demanded more borrowing authority with no strings attached. When his own party voted against that proposal a few weeks ago, he started telling us that we must raise the debt ceiling and called our commonsense budgeting reforms "gimmicks" and "radical."

Well, here's what I'm hearing from people in Missouri, my district. That's where common sense is:

Here's Reggie from Adrian, Missouri: "Raising the debt ceiling is like handing five more credit cards to someone who has already maxed out 50 other credit cards and then sitting back and saying you fixed the problem. How dumb would that be?"

Here's from Michael in Sedalia: "Don't give in. As a veteran receiving a pension, I continue to stand behind you and the House leadership in ex-

pecting meaningful spending cuts before raising the debt ceiling without raising taxes. Taxpayers don't like what's going on, and we aren't going to sit by and watch anymore."

Here's from Margaret from Lake Ozark: "A minimum of \$4 billion over 10 years is a drop in the bucket. We also need a constitutional amendment since our leaders can't seem to stop spending and do the right thing. Do the right thing now."

Here's from Judy from Warsaw, Missouri: "The very idea of increasing the debt limit to get us out of trouble is absurd. You cannot borrow your way out of trouble. Deal with it. Cut the pork."

Mark from Camdenton, Missouri: "We have always had to live within our means, and it is time for the government to do the same. We can't have everything we want. The government needs to be reduced. I do not think my children and grandchildren should pay for our lack of responsibility."

Larry from Conway, Missouri: "This is a turning point in history."

I agree. Let's do the right thing. Today let's pass Cut, Cap, and Balance.

VOTER SUPPRESSION AND VOTER ID

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose the epidemic across America of voter suppression and requiring voter ID.

Do you realize that in almost every election in my own State of Texas there has been discrimination, intimidation to voters? Where we used to be able to use a birth certificate, a utility bill, government check, paycheck, and other documents, now we cannot because someone suggests that someone will steal someone's birth certificate to impersonate a voter. I don't think that's right.

What we need now is to eliminate the poll tax of the 21st century. Barbara Jordan recognized that voting is a right, not a privilege, and she stood in the gap to ensure that Texas was covered by the Voting Rights Act. Barbara Jordan would not be here today if we had the voter intimidation that we're seeing growing across America.

Eliminate voter intimidation by elimination of the oppressive voter ID requirement by returning to the standard and acceptable requirements such as birth certificates, current utility bill, government check which provide the protection to protect the vote so that seniors and others will not be stopped from voting.

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Members of Congress, Congressional Black Caucus Members. Today, we address an issue that disturbs the very foundation of our Nation; the right of each and every citizen to participate in electing their representatives in government. Enshrined in our Constitution by our Nation's founders, this fun-

damental right is the linchpin of our democracy.

Unfortunately, the right to vote was not recognized for all people in this country at its inception. Indeed, for the several decades after the signing of the Constitution, the right to vote belonged to white men who owned property alone.

Through a long-fought effort by dedicated activists, courageous legislators and judges, and with the gradual evolution of public sentiment, the voting franchise was extended by law to all white men, non-white men, women, native Americans, and then finally, to all citizens over the age of 18.

However, even though the right to vote was legally recognized for all citizens of age, there have always been sinister efforts to suppress the vote of certain citizens who were guaranteed the right to vote by the Constitution.

Through poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, intimidation and outright violence, voter suppression remained an agenda by those who do not believe in the principle of one person, one vote, and who seek to keep certain groups from participating in our democracy.

VOTER ID

Voter photo identification legislation a recent phenomenon and the latest tactic of the voter suppression agenda. Only a decade ago, in any of our 50 states, a voter could set out on election Tuesday and be permitted to vote in his or her respective state without being required to present a photo ID to election officials.

Alarming, since that time, 15 states have adopted photo ID requirements for voting. In fact, at least 34 states have introduced legislation requiring voters to produce photo IDs at the voting booth in this year alone. Seven states, including my home state of Texas, have adopted the strictest form of voter photo ID legislation with the fewest exceptions.

This raises the question: what caused these states to, after more than two centuries of holding elections without photo ID requirements, impose such a burden on voters? Proponents of these laws argue that voter identification fraud is an epidemic in America, while there has been little documented evidence. Voter impersonation fraud occurs when one person votes using the identity of another.

In order to obtain a state-issued photo ID valid under these statutes, states often charge fees. Moreover the documents used for proof of identity in order to obtain photo IDs, such as birth certificates and social security cards, also cost money. When added together, along with transportation costs, the amount of money required to obtain an acceptable form of identification can be substantial for a citizen who lacks the financial means to do so.

Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections, a Supreme Court case decided in 1966, outlawed the Jim Crow requirement that a citizen pay a poll tax in order to be allowed to vote in an election. (Majority Opinion by Justice Douglas)

In its decision, the Court said—quote—"We conclude that a State violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment whenever it makes the affluence of the voter or payment of any fee an electoral standard."

However, with voter photo ID requirements, those who would suppress the rights of citizens to vote would have vote a way to implement a backdoor poll tax. Voters without valid, non-expired state or federal government